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ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 261011Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7484
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMCT/MCC THRESHOLD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0582
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1570
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0450
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0213
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0151
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1960
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1339
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: ALL SIDES PREDICTING A PEACEFUL MAY 27

REF: BISHKEK 766

Classified By: Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: One day before the May 27 opposition demonstration in central Bishkek (reftel), both government and opposition contacts continue to predict a violence-free demonstration. One protest organizer told the Embassy on May 26 that the opposition is expecting 30,000 demonstrators to take part, and said the opposition has been in talks with police officials all week regarding plans for May 27. A Deputy Minister of the Interior confirmed with the RSO on May 25 that MVD officials were coordinating with protest organizers to ensure a peaceful demonstration, and said he expected no problems. Embassy observers will monitor the demonstration. Any incidents of violence will be reported immediately by cable and to the Operations Center. END SUMMARY.

NO VIOLENCE PREDICTED

¶2. (SBU) Both opposition and government contacts said they expect Saturday's march and demonstration to proceed peacefully. Deputy MVD Minister Omurbek Suvanaliyev told the RSO that the MVD had been in talks with the opposition all week to ensure that the demonstration remains peaceful. Civil society leader and demonstration organizer Asiya Sassykbayeva confirmed this to PolOff on May 25, saying talks between the opposition and MVD had gone well and said she expected no problems or violence. Opposition leader Emil Aliyev, normally a reliable source of gloom and doom predictions, told the Embassy the opposition and MVD had been "fully cooperating," and said he expected no violence.

OPPOSITION, OTHERS PREDICTING LARGE TURNOUT

¶3. (C) Expectations for a strong turnout appear to be growing. On May 24, the Kazakh Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan told the Ambassador he believed over 30,000 people will attend the demonstration. Listing a litany of Bakiyev mistakes, he argued that there is strong dissatisfaction among the people

and that the opposition really did represent this anger. He added that Defense Minister Ismail Isakov has made a mistake in deciding to hold Armed Forces Day celebrations at the same time and place as the demonstration, and thus needlessly increasing the chance of a confrontation. Opposition leader Kubatbek Baibolov told the Ambassador on May 25 that he expected almost 100,000 people to attend, despite efforts by the Bakiyev regime to stymie the demonstration. He claimed that so many people were expected to come, that they were now urging some not to come. Other opposition contacts, however, told PolOff they are hoping for a turnout of 30,000. Baibolov noted that groups in the south, angered by personnel decisions by Bakiyev and recently sacked Head of the Presidential Administration Usen Sydykov, would be participating on Saturday. Several youth groups that did not participate in the April 27 demonstrations like Kel Kel, announced on May 25 that they will also participate.

POTENTIAL FOR PROBLEMS REMAINS

14. (C) But despite the numerous predictions for a happy and peaceful day, there remains the potential that the demonstration could turn violent. The Ministry of Defense has so far stuck by its plans to hold Armed Forces Day celebrations on Ala-Too Square at the same time as the planned demonstration. Although opposition contacts have told the Embassy they will begin their demonstration when the MOD event ends around 1100, Deputy MVD Minister Suvanaliyev told the RSO that the MOD celebration could drag on until the afternoon. If that is the case, it will sorely try the patience of the opposition, especially if thousands of

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protesters arrive at or are blocked from approaching the square and are forced to wait for hours to begin the demonstration. The opposition and even some members of the Presidential Administration have interpreted the MOD decision to move the Armed Forces Day celebration from May 28 to May 27 (a decision made by MOD at the last minute, and almost certainly at the instruction of the Presidential Administration) as a direct challenge and provocation.

EMBASSY REPORTING PLAN

15. (S//NF) The RSO will deploy local guard force surveillance detection (SD) teams to the area around Ala-Too square. RSO will also increase Mobile Patrols in neighborhoods of Mission residences nearest the center of town. The Embassy will also have one observer in an office overlooking the square. In the absence of violence or unexpected events, Post will not report on the demonstration over the weekend or Memorial Day holiday, although SIMO plans to report in its channels on May 27. RSO sent out a security notice on Thursday requiring Mission personnel to avoid the demonstrations and obey all local police restrictions in the area.

16. (C) COMMENT: The peaceful conclusion to the April 29 demonstration proved to both the government and opposition that large, peaceful demonstrations are possible in Bishkek. This lesson - along with the reasonably moderate rhetoric and demands on the part of the opposition - has certainly influenced planning for the May 27 protest, and is probably responsible for the lack of dire predictions in the days before the demonstration. Nevertheless, the potential for trouble remains. Large crowds are difficult to manage anywhere) but particularly here) and even a small incident could cause either the government or opposition to overreact, despite the best efforts of both sides to maintain order. In contrast to the downpour on April 29, the weather forecast for tomorrow is clear and sunny.
YOVANOVITCH